

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

Introduction

County Conservation Aids grant program is authorized under s. 23.09(12), Wis. Stats., and provides financial assistance to counties to enhance county fish and wildlife programs. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers this grant program with the assistance of s. NR 50.14, Wis. Adm. Code.

The program was established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1965 as an alternative to bounty payments on coyote, foxes, and bobcats. Every year since the bounty program ended, the Legislature has appropriated funding for the Program equal to the average annual bounty payment.

These funds are provided as cost-share to counties for fish and wildlife habitat projects. On an annual basis using moneys appropriated in the current Biennial Budget, funds are offered to each county in proportion to the ratio of the area of each county to the total area of the state.

New Application Process & Annual Deadline

Since grant amount for each county is prescribed in Wis. Stats., the DNR will notify every county of their annual award amount, in writing, no later than September 1st of each year. Application to request additional funds and grant agreement conditions will accompany notice of award amount.

Counties have the option to decline their award, accept their award, or accept their award and request additional funds. To accept the award amount or accept/request additional funds, the county authorized representatives must sign, date, and return the grant agreement to the DNR grant manager via email or postmarked no later than October 1, 2017. Failure by a county to formally accept the award amount by the October 1 deadline is equivalent to the county declining their grant award.

By affixing a signature on the grant agreement, the county's authorized representative has entered the county into a binding legal agreement with the DNR. The county may begin its project any time after the signed grant agreement has been returned to the DNR grant manager.

Any grant amount not claimed by a county will become available for the DNR to award to any county that requests more funds than its prescribed share under Wis. Stats.

Counties have two years from the date they sign their grant agreement to complete their project and request reimbursement from the DNR.

Project costs incurred by a county or tribe prior to the date that a county or tribe signed the grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement by the DNR.

Eligible Applicants

Counties and tribal governing bodies are eligible to apply for County Conservation Aids for eligible projects.

Eligible Projects

Grant funds under this program can only be used for county fish and wildlife projects per s. 23.09 (12), Wis. Stats. See chart on next page.

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

Category	Project Description Codes			
1	Development project -- The development of structures, utilities, facilities or landscaping necessary for outdoor recreation use of an area			
	1A	new trails	1E	gun range development
	1B	new fish cribs	1F	parking lot development
	1C	stream crossing	1G	constructing new fishing piers
	1D	kayak and boat launches or dock	1H	new boat launch ramp
			1J	new accessibility upgrades
2	Habitat projects -- The implementation of a specific activity or set of activities to restore or enhance wildlife or fish habitat, natural communities or shorelines			
	2A	burning	2F	Site preparations, seed purchase, seedling planting
	2B	prairie planting	2G	Dredging
	2C	food plots	2H	prairie restoration
	2D	stream restoration	2J	Mowing
	2E	streambank stabilization	2K	invasive species removal
3	Stocking projects -- The placement of fish or wildlife into their natural environment to improve population numbers.			
	3A	fish stocking	3B	wildlife stocking
4	Maintenance projects -- Repair or refurbishment of structures, fixtures, or substrates to restore to functional condition in a routine, scheduled, or anticipated fashion			
	4A	repairs to trails	4E	gun range repairs
	4B	repairs to culverts	4F	repairs to boat docks/ boat launch ramps
	4C	flowage maintenance	4G	accessibility upgrades
	4D	barrens maintenance		
5	Miscellaneous projects -- Any project that does not fit in categories 1 through 4.			

Eligible Project Expenses

Eligible project costs are unchanged from the current program structure. Below are examples of eligible items and ineligible items.

Grant funds may reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Materials, supplies, contractual services, labor
2. Salaries, fringe benefits, if directly related to the project
3. Rental or lease of equipment related to the project
4. Land restoration, if project adds to the permanent inventory or resources of the property.
5. Furnishings such as picnic tables, grills, and garbage receptacles.

Grant funds may not reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Administrative overhead
2. Purchases of computers, monitors, printers, peripheral devices, tools, and shop equipment
3. Educational materials such as brochures, videos, and books.

Calculating Sponsors Share (also called Sponsor Match)

This program is administered as a cost-sharing program. This means the grant only covers up to 50% of total project costs. The remaining portion of project costs must be paid by the county. Eligible sources of sponsor match include cash and non-cash donations.

Program Guidance:

County Conservation Aids Grant Program

There are three categories of non-cash donations:

1. **Donated general volunteer labor** – The maximum value of donated, non-professional labor shall be equal to the Wisconsin minimum wage. Currently, the Wisconsin minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. All donated hours must be documented, showing name of donor, hours worked, and date of donation.
2. **Donated materials, supplies, and professional labor** – This value is established by current market rates and must be established on an invoice provided by the donor.
3. **Donated equipment use** – Per s. NR 51.09(1)(c)4, Wis. Admin. Code, value is determined using Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) highway rates for equipment. You can find the rates on the Wisconsin DOT Equipment Rates web site at http://dnr.wi.gov/aid/documents/dotequiprates_standard.pdf.

How to Accept County Conservation Aids Grant and Request Additional Grant Funding

STEP 1: No later than September 1 each year, DNR grant manager sends award letter/grant agreement/grant application (Form 8700-045) to each county and tribe indicating amount of the grant award.

STEP 2: County contacts its local DNR Fisheries, Wildlife, or Forestry Specialist to obtain project approval; DNR Fisheries, Wildlife, or Forestry Specialist indicates approval by signing grant agreement.

STEP 3: County completes DNR Grant Agreement/Application (Form 8700-045) provided by the DNR. County attaches Authorizing Resolution to completed Form 8700-045.

STEP 4: County submits completed Form 8700-045 with any attachments to DNR Grant Program Manager either via email at Elizabeth.Norquist@Wisconsin.gov or postmarked no later than October 1.

Process for Re-allocating Grant Funds not Claimed by a County

If a county fails to formally accept its grant award amount by the October 1 deadline, then the DNR considers this to be the equivalent to the county declining this grant award. Under this program, the DNR may award funds not claimed by one county to another county. Process for re-allocation appears below.

- 1- Each county is located in one of 5 DNR regions. Click this link to see which counties are in each DNR region: <http://dnr.wi.gov/Contact/SSbyRegion.html>
- 2- Grant funds unclaimed by a county by the October 1st deadline will first be reallocated to other counties in the same DNR region that have requested additional project funds. All requests for additional funding within the region will be weighted equally. Any regional balance will be re-allocated among counties in the same DNR region until funds are exhausted.

EXAMPLE #1 – DNR Region 1 has 14 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in a \$6000 balance. Four counties accept their awarded amount and request additional funds. The \$6000 balance will be allocated within the region as follows:

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

County	Additional Amount Requested	Additional Amount Allocated
AA	\$50	\$50
AB	\$200	\$200
AC	\$1450	\$1450
AD	\$18000	\$4300
Total	\$19700	\$6000

- 3- If the amount of a regional balance is greater than the amount of additional project funds requested by counties in that region, then any residual funds will be re-allocated to counties in other DNR regions that have unmet project needs. All county requests for additional funding will be weighted equally. Residual funds will be re-allocated to counties in other DNR regions until funds are exhausted.

EXAMPLE #2 – DNR Region 5 has 10 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in an \$8000 balance. There are no requests for additional project funds from Region 5 counties. After all other regional re-allocations are complete; there are still counties with unmet project funding needs. The \$8000 balance from Region 5 will be allocated statewide as follows:

Region	County	Unfunded Project Amount	Additional Amount Allocated
1	AD	\$13700	\$2200
2	BF	\$1400	\$1400
3	CH	\$2775	\$2200
4	DB	\$4300	\$2200
	Total	\$22175	\$8000

- 4- If all regional reallocations and the statewide reallocation is completed and program funds still remain, those funds will carry forward into the next grant funding cycle and will be added to the next year's appropriation and be incorporated into the initial award notice that is sent to all 72 counties.
- 5- If a county accepts its grant award amount by the October 1 deadline, but later learns that it does not have the needed county match, then the county is encouraged to immediately notify the DNR that they wish to decline the offer of financial assistance. There is no penalty to the county for declining their share of CCA grant funds. Any grant amount declined by a county will be distributed to other counties using steps 2 and 3 above, in that order.

Reimbursement

The DNR administers this program on a reimbursement basis. This means all costs must be paid by the county or tribe, then the county or tribe may request reimbursement from the DNR. To request reimbursement, the county or tribe is required to submit completed DNR grant payment request (Forms 8700-001 and 8700-002) and detailed documentation (e.g., proof of purchase, proof of payment, force account details if local government staff are involved, volunteer labor worksheets showing hours worked, dates worked, and volunteer signatures, etc.).

County and tribal staff may find Forms 8700-001 and 8700-002 on the CCA Grant program webpage:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/CountyConservation.html>

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

Who to Call for Help

For general question about the County Conservation Aids Grant Program, acceptance of grant award or reimbursement questions, please contact the CCA Grant Program Manager, Beth Norquist, at 715-839-3751 or via email at Elizabeth.Norquist@Wisconsin.gov

The DNR has created a GovDelivery site for the CCA grant program that will make it possible for interested parties to receive email notices about program updates or changes. No later than July 1, 2017, GovDelivery link will be available through the CCA grant web page:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/CountyConservation.html>